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ABSTRACT

This document presents an instructor's manual designed to accompany the videotape, "Uses of Metaphors and Imagery in Counseling," a tool to teach beginning and experienced counselors how to more efficiently help their clients by focusing on the use of non-literal language and thoughts (i.e., metaphors and images). The format and content of the videotape is briefly described. The manual explains and gives examples of some of the main concepts presented in the video, followed by learning exercises, and provides further primary references for more in-depth reading on the subject. Major concepts covered in the video which are explained more fully in the manual and for which examples are given on how each concept is used in counseling include metaphors, similes, imagery, metaphorical stems, reframing, problem solving, therapeutic fairy tales and stories, guided imagery, client focused dreams, and lines of feelings. It is noted that the video provides five opportunities for the instructor to stop and practice concepts. The manual gives more details on how to conduct video exercises and suggests other exercises that can be employed in conjunction with the video. Exercises deal with: (1) using metaphorical stems in counseling; (2) problem solving using metaphors; (3) writing a therapeutic fairy tale; (4) telling of counselor stories; and (5) exploring dreams in a client-focused manner. Twenty-five references are included. (NB)

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INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL
FOR
USES OF METAPHORS & IMAGERY IN COUNSELING

by

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INSTRUCTOR'S MANUEL

USES OF METAPHORS AND IMAGERY IN COUNSELING

OVERVIEW

The videotape, "Uses of Metaphors and Imagery in Counseling," was designed to teach beginning and experienced counselors how to more efficiently help their clients by focusing on the use of non-literal language and thoughts (i.e., metaphors and images). Almost all counseling and therapeutic procedures depend on these devices to some extent. For example, numerous metaphors are employed in describing counseling concepts, such as Fritz Perls' "top dog/under dog," Eric Berne's "games," B. F. Skinner's "black box," and Sigmund Freud's "id." Clients also employ metaphors in describing and solving their problems. Likewise, images are often used by counselors and clients. The envisioning of what ideal life situations can be helps break the set of previous mental patterns and enables counselors and clients to picture and work toward new ways of being.

"Uses of Metaphors and Imagery in Counseling" briefly explains that counseling is a multidimensional process encompassing affective, behavioral, and cognitive components, and that by making interventions at one level (e.g., affective), the counselor can help the client make changes at other levels (e.g., behavioral and cognitive). Numerous techniques for using metaphors and images are explained on this video and proper and

improper ways of using these counseling tools are demonstrated. Five exercises are included in the tape so that viewer participants can practice the skills demonstrated. These exercises center around the use of metaphorical stems, problem solving with metaphors, writing a therapeutic metaphor, the telling of counselor stories, and exploring dreams in a multidimensional way. There are other times in the tape where it would also be appropriate to have participants examine and simulate techniques just viewed (e.g., with the process of reframing or the use of guided imagery). Thus, this 34 minute tape may easily be the basis for a two to three hour learning session.

To help instructors and viewers get the most out of this video, this manual will briefly explain and give examples of some of the main concepts presented in the video, followed by learning exercises, and further primary references that those most interested in the topic can consult for a more in-depth reading on the subject.

MAJOR CONCEPTS

In this part of the manual, the major concepts covered in the video are explained more fully and examples are given on how each concept is used in counseling.

Metaphors are defined in numerous ways, but are generally considered to be implied comparisons in which two seemingly dissimilar objects are identified with each other. Metaphorical

statements can generate new knowledge and insight in self and others by changing relationships between objects. They may operate on a verbal or a nonverbal level.

Examples of metaphors from counseling:

"He is king of the hill and of the house. His word is law and his actions speak with authority." (a wife describing her husband in marital counseling)

"I am a dot. I just stay in one spot and hope no one will see me." (a fearful child describing herself)

Similes are comparisons, just like metaphors, of seemingly dissimilar objects preceded by the words "as" or "like." For all practical purposes metaphors and similes are the same.

Examples of similes from counseling:

"I am as strong as three acres of garlic."

(a client describing himself)

"She is pretty as a rose and just as sharp as thorns."

(an office worker describing a fellow worker)

Imagery is defined as either a picture in the the mind of something that is not present, for example, a vision, a dream, a fantasy, or a hallucination, or a symbolic description that is conceptual, rather than pictorial in nature, for example, a theory. Images may help facilitate learning by recording experiences, enhance personal performance and creativity through the use of directed fantasies, or be used in problem solving. The two most dominant types of images are visual and auditory, although there are as many types of images as there are senses.

Examples of imagery in counseling:

A counselor working with a family notes patterns of interaction and "maps the family" in his/her mind. (use of visual imagery)

An adolescent boy tells his counselor that prior to getting in fights he hears his father's voice reminding him to "Never back down from a situation." (use of auditory imagery)

Counseling focuses on helping clients eliminate unwanted spontaneous images that cause them distress and pain, and promotes the structuring of images that direct clients to envision new possibilities and relax.

Metaphorical Stems are incomplete sentence blanks that allow participants to describe themselves metaphorically. Participants usually see them as non-threatening and insightful exercises.

Examples of metaphorical stems in counseling:

"I sleep like a _____; eat like a _____; and move like a _____. My friends might best describe me as a _____."

"When I am around others, I am just like a _____ because _____."

Reframing is describing a situation in a positive manner. It gives participants a different perception and may make the situation more easy to cope with or resolve.

Examples of reframing in counseling:

A child who is acting immaturely is described by the counselor as "behaving younger than his/her years."

A spouse who is acting indifferent may be said to be "protecting himself/herself from too much emotional intensity."

Problem solving (using metaphors) is taking a problem situation and placing it in a familar context. Since the client knows something about the familar context, he/she may be able to apply principles in such a setting to the problem.

Examples of problem solving in counseling:

A young girl who is disorganized and constantly runs late is invited to see her situation like a kitchen with the right ingredients to make a cake but with no directions. She is invited to supply the directions for making a cake and then to generalize and create instructions/rules for being organized.

An accountant is asked to place the debits and credits in his/her life into columns and question what assests he/she would need to acquire in the future to have a more balanced life.

Therapeutic Fairytales and Stories are written and verbal descriptions of situations that parallel client predicaments and personalities. (This process is known as the "isomorphic principle"). They are used to help the client begin to think about the future. The writing of fairytales is usually timed (6 to 10 minutes) so clients will concentrate on the task. In addition, all therapeutic fairytales begin with the phrase "Once upon a time...," are set far away in place and time, concentrate on a problem, and have a positive (although sometimes outlandish) ending. The delivery of counselor stories, perfected as a technique by Milton Erickson, should be brief and subtle. They are often about situations and people similar to the client

but are just far enough removed to peak client curiosity. After the telling of such stories, clients usually question how the stories relate to them (a transderivational search).

Examples of therapeutic fairytales and stories:

A client who continued to do the same thing over again wrote: "Once upon a time there was a boy who would go out after rains and splash in mudpuddles. His mother and family didn't like it and he was miserable everytime he got wet. Thus one day he decided after a rain, he would go outside and stayed on the sidewalk and watch the effect of the rain on neighboring plants. When he came back in, his family was pleased that he was dry, and he felt good about himself because of all the discoveries he had made. He thought "mud is a dud but sight is a delight." After that he lived mostly happily because he had found a way to have fun and stay on higher ground."

A counselor who was working with a depressed client told the following story. "I have a tree in my yard that I keep wondering about. It has good roots but no leaves. The weather is getting warmer and I keep questioning when it will become more active."

Therapeutic fairytales and counselor stories almost always need some transitional introductory rationale. It is easy to ask clients to write fairytales when they seem to be "stuck." Counselor stories may take more explaining, but they may simply be related with the counselor telling the client that what has just transpired in the session reminded him/her of that story.

Guided imagery is the structured use of client imagery where clients are invited to see themselves in a certain situation (usually in the future). The exercise assumes that if clients can see themselves performing, they can put their vision into action at a later time. Guided imagery is a mental exercise that translates to actual behavior.

Examples of guided imagery used in counseling:

A client who is having difficulty making a vocational decision is asked to picture herself five years in the future on a typical day. The counselor guides the client through the day's events, such as waking up, getting dressed, but the client pictures the settings.

A couple is asked to picture how their lives would be if each were treated as wished on a typical day. After going through the exercise, each member of the couple comes to realize more of what he or she wants as well as how his or her spouse wishes to be treated.

Client focused dreams are those where counselors help clients integrate dream symbols and actions into their lives by becoming parts of the dream through role playing or fantasy. The client is empowered in this procedure to make the most of his or her dreams.

Examples of client focused dreamwork in counseling:

A client discusses a disruptive dream, like the one related by Juanita in the video, and the counselor invites him or her to become all the different parts of the dream and explore it on a personal level. This may be particularly powerful with

reoccuring dreams, but counselors should be well versed in Gestalt theory and procedures before attempting it.

A client remembers fragments of dreams that he or she thinks are significant to the present. The counselor not only invites the client to become the different elements of the dream but to "fill in the gaps."

Lines of feelings is a drawing exercise where clients represent their emotions through the shape and color of lines. Jagged lines or those drawn in red may represent anger, while those that are smoother and drawn in green may represent tranquility. The interpretation of the lines is left up to clients. In this exercise, they not only envision their emotions about certain situations, but see them as well.

Examples of lines of feelings used in counseling:

A client who is nonverbal and depressed is asked to draw out his or her feelings about what they are presently experiencing. The drawing allows the client and the counselor an opportunity to focus on the client's emotions not possible previously.

A couple, experiencing marital problems, is each given paper, colored markers, and instructions to represent their feelings about their relationship through drawing lines. The drawings help them see more clearly how each views the relationship and assist the counselor in quickly getting into the emotions with which the couple is working.

EXERCISES TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE VIDEO

The video provides five opportunties for the instructor of participants to stop and practice concepts that have just been covered. In this part of the manual, more details are given on how to conduct video exercises. In addition, other exercises that can be employed in conjunction with this video are suggested.

Exercise I -- Using Metaphorical Stems in Counseling

The purpose of this exercise is to help viewer participants become more aware of the many ways clients can describe themselves. Sometimes, clients will spontaneously compare themselves to an object, an animal, or a situation. For example, a client may say about his or her health "I'm as fit as a fiddle" or about anxiety, "I feel antsy." At other times, it is appropriate for the counselor to invite the client to use metaphorical stems to describe him- or herself. The least threatening way to do this is to simply ask the client to compare him- or herself to an object or an animal and then to talk about the reasons behind the comparison. In such an exercise, the client can gain valuable insight into self not otherwise available. As the video demonstrates, metaphorical stems should never be forced on the client. Viewer participants can complete this task by filling in metaphorical stems suggested by each other or by the instructor (e.g., "I am as strong as _____;" or "When I picture myself as a house, I am a _____ because _____.").

Exercise II -- Problem Solving Using Metaphors

When clients are able to see their situation in light of something with which they are familar, they can often find ways to productively deal with their concerns. For example, in the video, Juanita was able to problem solve about family matters by comparing them with problems found in baking. The clearest way to help clients problem solve in this way is to find out what they do best, and then explore with them their present concern in light of this activity. Try to help them find parallels in both, so the difficult and unfamilar (i.e., the concern) becomes more easy to understand and solvable. Viewer participants can complete this exercise by either looking at their own concerns and strengths or by examining those of clients in the way just described.

Exercise III -- Writing a Therapeutic Fairy Tale

This exercise is almost always responded to in an enthusiastic manner. The directions are given in the video, but remember, the tale should begin "Once upon a time...," be placed far away in distance and time, and include a problem and a positive solution (even if it is outlandish). Furthermore, the exercise is timed (6 to 10 minutes) so clients will concentrate more on it. Participants should be invited to write and share a fairy tale during the time the video is turned off.

Exercise IV -- Telling of Counselor Stories

Counselor stories are really metaphors that describe to the client a situation similar to his or her's and invite the client to see meaningful parallels and possibilities. Although Milton

Erickson and David Gordon are the two most widely known masters of this process, counselor stories have been around since ancient times. For example, in the Bible, the prophet Nathan tells King David a story about injustice, where a rich man with many sheep took a poor man's only sheep. David is furious and in response says the rich man should be severely punished, to which Nathan reminds him he is such a man in regard to his relationship with Bethsheba. As counselors our job is not to convict or confront like Nathan, but to help our clients realize their situation is both universal and unique. This is what a properly told counselor story does. Viewers should be invited to think of any counselor stories they have previously heard and share them with others. Then they should be invited to formulate a brief story about a situation one of their clients has. When they share this story, other participants can help them refine their technique. If additional help is necessary, consult David Gordon's book -- THERAPEUTIC METAPHORS.

Exercise V -- Exploring Dreams in a Client-Focused Manner

Many clients have their strongest images in dreams. This exercise is meant to help them understand their dreams better and come to some personal interpretations about them. Such a process empowers clients and helps them resolve other events in their lives. Be sure viewers are familar with Gestalt counseling theory. Then invite them to share their own or a client's dream and become all of the elements within the dream. If a client's dream is used, the viewer should take extra caution to protect the identity of the client in line with AACD ethical standards.

Other Exercises to Use with the Video

1. Have video participants list as many metaphors, similes, and images that they can remember from personal or professional experiences. For example, Karl Menninger, on his 95th birthday, is said to have described his life as "a spool of thread" unwinding in time. Allow participants ten minutes for this exercise and then have them share especially meaningful metaphors and images they have had. The goal of this exercise is to get participants to realize more fully how numerous and powerful metaphors and images are.

2. After viewing the first vignette in the video, ask participants for examples of metaphors and images that have not been effective for them or others and explore with them the reasons why. Have them examine their feelings and thoughts about using metaphorical stems as a clinical tool for helping certain clients. Is their a difference in their emotions and cognitions? If so, how might that affect their employment of this technique?

3. Some clients use metaphors and images much more frequently than others. Explore with participants how they might work with clients who speak metaphorically. What are the drawbacks to such a procedure? Review the vignettes where Marianne and Juanita describe their situations as merry-go-rounds. Compare the responses of Paul and Jennifer to these descriptions. Have participants write down what they would say to Marianne and Juanita.

4. Ask participants to divide up into groups of three -- client, counselor, and observer. Have the client present a

problem in words and sentences that make the situation seem strange and unresolvable. Have the counselor help the client describe the problem situation in a more familar way or in clearer language. For example, in the video Juanita envisions effective family life similar to the process of baking -- one has to be organized, have the right ingredients, allow enough time, etc.

5. Sometimes inappropriate metaphors and images are used in counseling. If the client does not have experience in one area, the counselor's words may be meaningless or confusing. For example, a person from an isolated region might not understand the sentence: "My heart was beating like a taxi running." Likewise, an urban dweller might not have a clear idea of the phrase "like a duck on a June bug." In simulated counseling settings, ask participants to create metaphors that they think most clients would understand.

6. Discuss with viewers other advantages and disadvantages of using metaphors and imagery in counseling. Make a list of both and ask participants how they might overcome disadvantages associated with these processes. Explore with participants when, where, how, and with whom they would use these counseling tools.

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